

The Effect of Candidate Race on Federal Campaign Contributions

David Singer, Department of Government, Singer.davidisaac@gmail.com

Background

Political parties do their best to obtain power and influence by supporting party members in elections. Campaign financing is an integral component to a political campaign, and the candidate who spends the most money usually wins (Biersack, 2012). Therefore, it is in a political party's best interest to nominate candidates capable of fundraising more than the competition to have the best chance of winning.

Research Question

Does a congressional candidate's race or ethnicity have an effect on the amount of funds he or she can raise?

Methods and Materials

I performed an OLS regression on all independent expenditures from 2010 to 2014 concerning general elections of House and Senatorial seats. The primary variable of interest analyzed is candidate race. The data was obtained from the Federal Election Commission.

OLS Regression, Dependent Variable: Funds Raised

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
White Republican*	-13,790.1	2,078.00
Minority Democrat*	-18,063.06	2,392.25
White Democrat*	-22,289.43	2,073.89
Male Candidate*	2,626.90	433.45
Senatorial Candidate*	-8,714.06	452.69
Mideast Region*	-6,297.68	923.87
Great Lakes Region*	-3,203.68	824.11
Plains Region*	5,219.25	989.52
Southeast Region	-1,239.78	835.65
Southwest Region	-756.6455	1,096.283
Rocky Mountain Region*	6,943.95	1,079.65
Far West Region*	4,540.65	975.34
Terms of Incumbency	-42.37	64.66
Election Cycle 2012*	2,403.70	511.32
Election Cycle 2014*	3,108.80	530.96
Constant*	32,420.31	2,200.33

Source: Federal Election Commission, Independent Expenditures 2010 – 2014

N = 146,302 $R^2 = 0.0118$

*Indicates a variable is significant

Results

- Minority Republican candidates fundraise \$13,790.10 more than white Republican candidates
- Minority Democrat candidates fundraise \$4,226.37 more than white Democrat candidates
- Less than 3% of all contributions were donated to minority candidates

Conclusion

Based on the initial data analysis, political party leaders may want to consider nominating more minority candidates. Since the data tells us that minority candidates fundraise more money than their white counterparts, they will be more successful in election outcomes. Application of the results may lead to an increase in the diversity of representation in the House of Representatives and Senate.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Kyle Endres for his guidance and support, fellow IPD research students for their constructive critiques, and Dr. Michael Findley for making this research possible.

References

- Biersack, Bob. 2012. "The Big Spender Always Wins."
OpenSecrets, January 11, 2012